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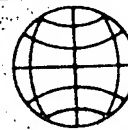
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THE THIRD CENTURY



AMERICA IN A HOSTILE WORLD

by Zbigniew Brzezinski

Two hundred years after the birth of the first nation committed explicitly to the principle of independence, the appearance of a world based on self-determination has become somehow troubling and threatening to the very nation that has contributed so directly to the shaping of this new world. Indeed, it poses the specter of an isolated America in a hostile world.

That world appears hostile not because it so proclaims itself—though parts of it do—but because what is happening in that world seems so at variance with American values and expectations. Global politics are becoming egalitarian rather than libertarian, with demands from more politically activated masses focusing predominantly on material equality rather than on spiritual or legal liberty. Moreover, the global distribution of power is beginning to favor political systems remote philosophically, culturally, ethnically, and racially from American antecedents, while the process of redistribution of that power is threatening new forms of violence. All of that makes for an uncertainty in America about the thrust of global change—and in many parts of the world for the feeling that America is against global change.

The result is a fundamental shift in the way that Americans perceive themselves in

This article was adapted from a chapter in the author's forthcoming book of the same title to be published by Basic Books.

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relation to the rest of the world, and in the way much of that world perceives America. Traditionally, Americans have seen their society as the wave of the future, and as an embodiment of libertarian values of universal pertinence; much of the world—be it poor immigrants or activist nationalist leaders—saw America much the same way. This libertarian link defined America's place in the world and gave America a very special standing.

Today, many Americans recoil in horror from a world that appears to them headed in the wrong direction, while many abroad—especially in the new nations—perceive America as indifferent or even hostile to their condition. America's bounty—which in the past was seen almost as history's reward for America's liberty—has become the focal point of envy, thus breeding in turn anxieties regarding the egalitarian values proclaimed by the newly emancipated nations.

The Danger of Philosophical Isolation

America was born in liberty. That central fact shaped much of America's character and world role during the subsequent 200 years of its history. It also defined the nature of the world reaction to America during much of that time, thus making the spiritual dimension an important aspect of America's world role.

To be sure, the social and even political reality of America was far removed from the libertarian ideal. The America born in liberty was largely a mixture of a slave-owning rural aristocracy and a newly emerged urban commercial class, with voting rights restricted to a minority. The subsequent 200 years of the country's history can be seen in large measure as a struggle to fulfill that libertarian ideal and to give it substance in the context of a changing socio-economic setting. The struggle against slavery, the extension of suffrage, the open doors to immigrating millions, the implementation of social rights, the violence surrounding the emergence of the trade unions, the battles for civil

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rights for blacks, and lately women's assertion went hand in hand also with appearance of larger and more powerful personal fortunes, the widening public's of corporate influence, the emergence of bureaucratic clusters of institutional power, and the pervasive cultural influence of a commercialized mass media based only several, mostly New York City local national publications and three television networks.

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This pattern gave an ambivalent meaning to America's history—and it justifies the most varnished as well as the most critical interpretations of America's past—that ambivalence—inherent in complex historical processes—does not negate the historical symbolism and the historical sense of the American message. The moments in history that capture and embody a mood, that express—however imperfectly—a certain pervasive aspiration give substance—however inadequate—a felt hope. The idea of liberty, wedded to the notion of progress, was “in the air” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—and the appearance of America expressed it. Though the parallel may seem as offensive, the above also explains why Cuba or China are today so attractive to so many. The idea of equality is increasingly the underlying mood and the inspiration in an increasingly congested world, and it is more often than not first expressed by intellectuals. Thus—in spite of the domination and the pervasive control of the United States—both the Cuban and the Chinese societies—to many people both of which have become significant symbols, not only the way that America impacted on the world, but also the sympathetic and fascinated late ei

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This pattern gave an ambivalent meaning to America's history—and it justifies both the most varnished as well as the most critical interpretations of America's past. Yet that ambivalence—inherent in complex historical processes—does not negate the special historical symbolism and the historical essence of the American message. There are moments in history that capture and symbolize a mood, that express—however imperfectly—a certain pervasive aspiration, that give substance—however inadequately—to a felt hope. The idea of liberty, wedded to the notion of progress, was “in the air” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—and the appearance of America expressed it. Though the parallel may strike some as offensive, the above also explains why Cuba or China are today so attractive to so many. The idea of equality is increasingly the underlying mood and the felt aspiration in an increasingly congested world, and it is more often than not first expressed by intellectuals. Thus—in spite of the regimentation and the pervasive control that dominate both the Cuban and the Chinese societies—to many people both countries have become significant symbols, not unlike the way that America impacted on many sympathetic and fascinated late eighteenth

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and early nineteenth century Europeans.

Indeed, on rereading some of the contemporary accounts of early postrevolutionary America, one is even struck by the extent to which their style and content parallel the accounts rendered not quite 200 years later after visits to China or Cuba. This parallelism highlights the importance of the relationship of political events to a pervasive mood or emerging values; the event both crystallizes the mood and acts as a catalyst for it, making it into a compelling outlook. An existing intellectual receptivity is thus translated into a state of mind by an account of a reality that is said to correspond already to the aspiration, an account made all the stronger by its exotic quality—as was true of a visit to America then, or of a recent visit to China—granting the raconteur the aura of having partaken of something unique and perhaps historically sacred.

There are thus the repeated references to honest and hard-working peoples, guided by a high sense of personal morality and civic dedication. As Brissot de Warville put it in his *New Travels in the United States of America*, 1788, Americans have "the simple and kindly but dignified look of men who are conscious of their liberty and to whom all other men are merely brothers and equals." Bostonians particularly are reported to be "courteous to foreigners and obliging to their friends; they are tender husbands; loving—almost adoring—fathers, and kind masters. . . . A girl believes an oath pronounced by love, and her young man keeps his word or else is forever disgraced. You see girls go off for a drive in the country with their sweethearts in a chaise, and their innocent pleasures are never beclouded with insulting suspicions."

There are the breathless accounts of personal interviews with the top leader, a man endowed with special graces and unique vision. In an extremely informative diary of his travels over the eastern seaboard of America, Julian Niemcewicz, a Polish nobleman who had accompanied Thaddeus Kos-

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ciusko on his second trip to the United States, gives in his *Travels in America 1797-1807*, a detailed rendition of his sojourn with George Washington, and it reads—with *à la* *l'ère majesté* intended—not unlike interview of more recent vintage. Niemcewicz, having first been introduced to the General in early May of 1798 at a social gathering in Georgetown, spent in June of that year 12 days as a guest of the former first president at Mount Vernon and provides a graphic account of the man, of his wife, of his life style, and of his views. He is especially impressed by the political vision of the American leader as well as by his civic spirit. Niemcewicz clearly conveys the feeling that he found himself in the presence of historic greatness, of "a great man, whose virtues are equal to the merits of his service to his country."

Most important of all, the early chroniclers convey the sense that the new American reality is the beginning of something very special, of a new age which it both symbolizes and is creating. Edmund Burke, despite his skepticism toward democracy, perhaps expressed this sentiment best of all: "The great Revolution has happened—a Revolution made not by chipping and changing power in any of the existing States, but by the appearance of a new State of a new Species in a new part of the Globe. It has made as great a change in all the relations and balances of power, as the appearance of a new Planet would in the system of the solar World."

The point in noting all of the above is not to draw parallels between America and China, nor to doubt the validity of the observations. Rather, it is to stress the proposition that at given stages of history there are moments that acquire special significance—and that Americans should be both proud of theirs and be wary lest it become a transitional phenomenon. As R. R. Palmer observed in his *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, "the American revolution coincided with the climax of the Age of Enlightenment. It was

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itself, in some degree, the product of its age." The American spirit of liberty and the unique and novel American experiment with a constitution infected Europe, and as a result—again in Palmer's words—"the effects of the American revolution, as revolution, were imponderable and very great. It inspired a sense of a new era. It added a new content to the conception of progress. It gave a whole new dimension to ideas of liberty and equality made familiar by the Enlightenment...."

America's appearance was thus an historical watershed. The rhetoric of American independence and the principles of the Bill of Rights expressed most explicitly ideas and notions that were beginning to surface in Europe but were constrained from practical application by the strength of traditional European institutions. It was in the much more fluid and flexible American social context that these notions could become politically dominant, and their surfacing as the official belief of the new state had an immensely captivating effect on progressive Europeans, impatient with their own sociopolitical structures and desirous of profound change. In the absence of this ideological impact, the very fact of separation from the home kingdom of several remote, partially traditional-rural and partially commercial colonies would not have had much global resonance.

The libertarian aspect of America's birth branded the American experience in a particularly compelling fashion—and it had a lasting effect both on how Americans came to define themselves and on how others perceived America. It was the basis for a lasting and powerful myth, enduring even when America came to act like other states, even when American business came to be a powerfully expanding and exploitative force within weaker adjoining areas (especially in Central America), even when America became the principal bulwark of states only remotely to be characterized as motivated by a libertarian passion. It was the libertarian myth

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which gave a special quality to the way American troops were welcomed by ecstatic crowds in Europe and even in some places in Asia, and it was also the libertarian myth, and not just economic opportunity, that drew to America—rather than to Latin America or elsewhere—large numbers of European immigrants.

It was a vital and a self-perpetuating tradition, nurtured by American public education, reinforced by the rhetoric of American presidents, and eagerly absorbed and disseminated by individual Americans—especially in regard to their countries of origin. To the extent to which the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth were dominated politically by ideas stressing liberty and national self-determination, the American embodiment of libertarian values provided a philosophical reinforcement for American foreign policy probably without precedent.

Moreover, American social structure and social history were generally consonant with this primacy of the concept of liberty. America was the freest society—even though many of its social arrangements made for inequality and differentiated liberty—for the dynamism of American social development and the open frontier—to the immigrants in the East and to the pioneers in the West—made for flexibility without precedent. Internal personal freedom, the free market, social and geographic mobility all combined to intertwine myth and reality in the notion of liberal democracy.

This condition could not last—but it lasted long enough to stamp in a special way America's relationship to the world. It was a liberating relationship. Indeed, even the profound crisis of American capitalism in the 1930s did not vitiate but reinforced the relationship. Franklin Roosevelt, by creatively applying through the New Deal a mixture of liberalism with a dose of socialism to the American conditions (with both theories representing the major reactions and normative syntheses of the earlier European

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pean industrial experience), shaped a model which to many Europeans became again a compelling vision of the future. It seemed to preserve and even to enhance personal liberty by infusing that liberty also with an egalitarian social component. World War II and its immediate aftermath were thus the high watermarks of the American appeal.

"... it is vital to remember that ultimately it is only America that has the power to shape a hostile world for itself."

As a consequence, American foreign policy operated from a philosophical base and with a mass appeal that provided unique assets and were probably as important to the post-World War II American paramountcy as were its military might and its relative gross national product to that of the rest of the world. Though egalitarianism was already beginning to gain momentum in the more advanced societies, its appeal was hampered on the one hand by the discredited Stalinist Soviet Union and on the other by the fact that much of the rest of the world was still preoccupied with its own national emancipation. That emancipation, as Nehru or Nkrumah or Sukarno would often emphasize, partook for its emotive power more from the American than from the Bolshevik or from the Chinese revolutions.

Yet in that process a subtle but accelerating change was taking place. The Western, largely urban society was quietly becoming welfare-oriented, while the new states were rapidly confronted, almost at their birth, with the consciously perceived reality of global inequality. The attainment of their external liberty, rarely if ever matched by domestic liberty, thus became the point of departure of a quest for greater global equality—an equality more often defined externally (for example, in "the Charter of the Rights and Duties of States" proposed by Mexico's President Echeverria in 1973) than practiced internally—with the result that in

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the space of two and a half decades the preoccupations of the more activist and articulate international political actors had been rapidly transformed.

This new situation stands in sharp contrast to the situation which prevailed during and right after World War II. The Atlantic Charter did express the dominant yearnings of a period—and America symbolized them. American values and interests were consonant then with the values and interests of the more active and central part of the world. Americans saw themselves enhancing their own liberty by protecting the freedom of the Europeans; as promoting their own economic well-being by financing the recovery of Europe and Japan. Today, the traditional American values of individualism, free enterprise, the ethic, and efficiency are contested both at home and even more abroad by the emphasis on the collective (national or societal), on social equity, and on welfare. The desire for a "new economic order" is symptomatic of the new global mood. America's relationship to that desire is more ambivalent. The quest for global welfare appears to many Americans as a claim on their resources and as posing the confiscation of the fruits of labor, with the result that sympathy for the new nations has gradually given way to rising suspicions and antipathy. A new set of values and perceptions has opened between America and major parts of the world.

The attendant danger of a philosophical isolation without precedent in American history has been accentuated by the new content and substance of U.S. foreign policy, especially as pursued by the Nixon administration that came into power in 1969. It seemed committed to a largely static world, based on a traditional balance of power, seeking accommodation among major powers on the basis of sphere of influence, and more generally oriented toward preserving the status quo than reforming it.

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The attendant danger of a philosophical isolation without precedent in American history has been accentuated by the new style and substance of U.S. foreign policy, especially as pursued by the Nixon administration that came into power in 1969. Covert, manipulative, and deceptive in style, it seemed committed to a largely static view of the world, based on a traditional balance of power, seeking accommodation among the major powers on the basis of spheres of influence, and more generally oriented toward preserving the status quo than reforming it.

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This further widened the gap that was opened already during the Vietnam war—a war initiated by an administration that paradoxically was more sympathetic to global change—and provided the emotional underpinnings for an increasingly hostile attitude abroad toward U.S. foreign policy.

Capitalism in One Country

The emerging philosophical and political isolation could, in time, also become economic and social. While the world is certainly not moving toward a single socio-economic model—and the Communist expectation of global socialism is a doctrinal remnant from the nineteenth century inclination toward simplistic utopias—the broad pattern of change is toward societies that will be more urban, more industrial, more welfarist, more congested, and probably more statist in the sense that governments in most places will be the major initiators of economic change and controllers of national resources. But for some time to come, the political as well as the socio-economic complexion of the world's states will continue to differ greatly, without a single model emerging as ideologically dominant.

This diversity notwithstanding, the general trend is toward systems that do diverge from the American blend of private enterprise, corporate ownership, and indirect governmental control. While the United States has not been immune to these trends, with the post-Depression New Deal expressing in America a new societal perception of the government's role, it has been more reluctant than most other advanced industrial societies to accept governmental intervention in social and economic affairs. Even its immediate neighbors, Canada and Mexico, have gone considerably farther in social legislation and in extending the scope of the central government's economic powers. Moreover, on the level of doctrinal rhetoric, the American commitment to free enterprise; to the business ethic, to the creative role of the profit motive—with its connected com-

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mercial culture—stands out as quite distinctive, unmatched even in such otherwise similarly business-oriented societies as the West German or the Japanese. This rhetoric in some respects is even in conflict with actual realities, for such phenomena as Amtrak, soon to be followed by Conrail, the National Housing Partnership, Comsat, financial aid to Lockheed, not to speak of much earlier Tennessee Valley Authority, of the complex but certainly close relationship between the Defense Department and defense-oriented industries are all indicative of major shifts in America as well.

The fact remains, however, that in industrialized democracies the economic role of the state has grown more rapidly than in the United States. While French indicative planning cannot be compared to central planning in state-owned Communist-type economies and while the direct role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in Japan (even considering its symbiotic relationship to the Keio and the latter's links to the Liberal Democratic Party's leadership) cannot be compared to that of Gosplan, in both states the economic role of the government is more decisive and direct. As data in Raymond Vernon's *Big Business and the World* indicates, public ownership in other advanced democracies has expanded considerably and embraces the key sectors of the industrial economy. The extent of governmental involvement is even higher in many of the developing states, especially since their nonagricultural private sectors remain generally weak.

Capitalism in one country is the pattern inherent in the American pattern. In the case with Stalin's "socialism in one country," it could prompt in America a siege mentality and, again, as in the case, with much of it self-induced. For economic diversity or even distinctiveness does not prompt political-ideological hostility, especially if the distinctive model—ceasing to exercise attraction qua m

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remains for many the most appealing condition (as still remains very much the case with the United States). In that context for Americans to inject into American external relations the ideological claim that the contemporary world struggle is between liberal democracy and various forms of despotic statism is to provide a counterproductive economic reinforcement to the already noted political-philosophical tendencies toward America's global isolation. Making liberal democracy the key issue—as was done in 1975 by a number of key administration spokesmen—also deprives the United States of the opportunity to exploit its commitment to pluralism with a positive stress on U.S. support of global diversity; instead, by dichotomizing reality it tends to create a doctrinal coalition against the United States.

Such a coalition also can draw sustenance from the widespread view abroad that the external expansion of American business, particularly in the guise of multinational companies, entails a new form of American political and economic imperialism. The appearance and major expansion of these internationally active American firms, often organized on a regional or national basis (hence inaccurately labeled as multinationals), was in itself a response to the narrowing of domestic opportunities for U.S. capital, in large part because of expanded social regulations and obligations. However, it occurred also at a time of sudden proliferation worldwide in the number of governments and of an intensified preoccupation with national control over key or essential economic sectors, all of which served to relate resentments against foreign American economic presence to the nature of the American economic system. As a result, national economic policy in a number of countries, especially though not exclusively in Latin America and Africa, has acquired a distinctively anti-American and anticapitalist bias.

This bias further widened the gap between American and non-American perceptions of world economic development. To

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many Americans, especially those in the business world, the "multinational" was a creative response to the emerging new world of interdependence. A flexible and transnational instrument for the dissemination of technology, know-how, capital, and production, it was said in the words of John H. Diebold, "Multinational Corporations: We Should Be Scared of Them?" (FOREIGN POLICY 12), to be paving the way to a more truly cooperative world: "The logical eventual development... would be the end of nationality and national government as we know them." In contrast, the argument heard more often abroad, though voiced by more radical American economists, was that the multinational corporation was primarily an instrument for the indirect extension of the power of American capitalism, creating willfully or objectively a form of dependency and exploitation, thereby "the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected."¹ This viewpoint, and large, tended to dominate the outlook of the new nations. The argument over multinationals was thus an extension to the world economy of the more philosophical and political clash over the question of proper relative weight of, and relationship between, liberty and equality—and it further highlighted the danger of the system as well as conceptual isolation of the United States.

Emerging U.S. vulnerability to resource shortages in several areas of key importance to U.S. economic vitality makes this link between philosophical and systemic differences even more threatening. U.S. dependence on imported minerals is gradually increasing and thus also the U.S. sta-

¹ Benjamin J. Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism: The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 190, as cited in C. Fred Bergsten and Lawrence B. Krause, *World Politics and International Economics* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1973), p. 44.

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orderly political relations with a number of countries that are not likely to be in ideological sympathy with the United States. Though any serious appraisal must take into account the potential for substitution, or for the development of alternative processes, data developed systematically under the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 by the Office of the Secretary of the Interior points to the prospect of increasing commodity deficiencies, independently of political factors, among such items as aluminum, asbestos, barium, bismuth, cadmium, copper, diamond, fluorine, germanium, gold, indium, lead, mercury, sand and gravel, sulphur, tin, tungsten, uranium, and zinc. A gradual shift in the U.S. economy from mineral self-sufficiency to partial external dependency has already been taking place, with the United States dependent in 1950 for only 15 per cent of its needs in dollar terms on imports from abroad; by 1970, the foregoing had increased to approximately 25 per cent; and by the year 2000, the percentage may be anywhere from 60 per cent to 70 per cent.

This development has so far not generated the more dire consequences predicted by some observers immediately after the successful 1973 price self-assertion by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—notably the predictions both of resource scarcities and of resource cartelization—but the trend is clearly toward much higher U.S. import costs. This as of itself will generate the appearance of new constraints on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, while some foreign powers may begin to strive to exploit more deliberately the fact that only 6 per cent of the world's population consumes approximately 30 per cent to 35 per cent of the total world production of petroleum, 55 per cent to 60 per cent of natural gas, 15 per cent of coal, 20 per cent of steel, 35 per cent of aluminum, and 30 per cent of copper.

The combination of systemic uniqueness with unique wealth makes the United States

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an obvious target for emotional hostility and economic pressure. That pressure is likely to come not from cartels based on a single commodity (since the special circumstances of OPEC are hard to replicate) but from mixed political-economic alliances in which clusters of diverse states might attempt to combine their varying assets in order to press the United States in a particular direction. The inclination to try to do this is likely to be enhanced by the general politicization of world economics. The proliferation of new states with weak private sectors has thrust many governments into external economic roles assumed elsewhere by private business. The growing emphasis on national control of resources has caused widespread nationalizations of foreign assets, especially in the extractive areas.² The need to provide some structure and stability to the management of global resources (be it commodity prices or the exploitation of deep-ocean resources) has prompted also the need for new international negotiations. The widespread feeling among the new nations that existing international arrangements perpetuate their economic disadvantage has caused the United Nations to undertake explicitly an examination of the need for a new "international economic order." All of that has had the effect of widening the role of governments in world economics. That in turn means that issues heretofore handled either by the private sector or through private-governmental negotiation, largely on the basis of business criteria, are tending to become injected with political content. The effect is to reinforce and in some cases to make dominant the role of political motives and of political criteria in international economics.

In that setting, structural change in

² According to one count, in the years 1973-1974 there were some 37 major acts of nationalization in 18 African countries alone, involving some 40 per cent to 100 per cent of the affected foreign assets. See C. Aleksandrovskaya and I. Matsenko, "Opyt i problemy natsionalizatsii v stranakh Afriki," *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia* no. 7, 1974, pp. 51-52.

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American way of doing things becomes inevitable. Resist as it might, the American system is compelled gradually to accommodate itself to this emerging international context, with the U.S. government called upon to negotiate, to guarantee, and, to some extent, to protect the various arrangements that have been contrived even by private business. The oil crisis also has had the effect of stimulating congressional pressures for the assertion of greater governmental control over the operations and practices of U.S. oil companies, including negotiations with oil-producing states. This, too, has served to enhance the role of the state. The economic role of the U.S. government thus continues to expand both for domestic and international reasons, and in the process the distinctiveness of capitalism in one country may become somewhat blurred. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that for a long time to come both fundamental philosophical as well as structural differences will continue to complicate the relationship between the changing world and America.

The Problem of Will

In that context, America could easily slide into a siege mentality. Warning signals abound. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, much to national applause, began in 1975 to counterattack criticisms from the new nations in terms almost as sharp as those used in the early 1950s by another American ambassador to the United Nations, appointed then to forcefully rebut Soviet attacks. In a much cited speech of October 3, 1975, he invoked, in words pregnant with emotionalizing imagery, the concept of a beleaguered democratic minority assailed from all sides by enemies:

In the United Nations today there are on the range of two dozen democracies left. Totalitarian Communist regimes and assorted ancient and modern despotisms make up all the rest. And nothing so unites these nations as the conviction that their success ultimately depends on our

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failure. . . . It is sensed in the world that democracy is in trouble. There is blood in the water and the sharks grow frenzied. . . .

These words struck responsive chords among various groups of American society. To organized labor, they stood in welcome contrast to what was perceived as a dangerous tendency over the recent years for U.S. officialdom to cater both to Communists and to the new states; to the influential Jewish community, long the source of support for enlightened internationalism, the words were a deserved rebuff to the Soviet Arab-Afro-Asian coalition against Israel; to the more conservative sectors of American society, they represented a belated recognition that American values were being threatened by a counterproductive courtship of fundamentally hostile systems of values and governance. To be told that in the complex and changing world—as they were in the same speech—“most of the new states, most of the old ones have ended up enfeebled of freedom as we would know it” was to provide a welcome escape from complexity, even if in the guise of isolated self-righteousness.

Yet such isolated self-righteousness could prove particularly destructive to the components of the underlying basis of legitimacy of the American system as a world power. That legitimacy, on the deeper psychological level, has been derived from a combination of optimism and universalism. Americans have instinctively believed in the idea of progress and in their system as the unique political expression of such progress. And most believed that the American-type liberal democracy was a potential model for the rest of the world. Yet explicit in the emergent new mood was the sudden recognition that perhaps “progress” was destructive and even dangerous. That the American system was no longer the carrier of a universally applicable model. This could make for a much more realistic American self-perception, in so far as it respects thus more mature and realistic

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the sudden fading of the underlying sources of the system's legitimacy could prove destabilizing, and it could prompt many Americans to take refuge in the reassuring simplicity of the notion of the Hostile World as the successor to the Cold War—with both notions substituting political dichotomy for global complexity.

The temptation to escape from a world which all of a sudden looked quite antipathetic was also derived from internal changes in American society that had the effect of shattering the earlier consensus on foreign policy and of undermining American will to play a positive world role. That consensus has been reinforced by the presence of a relatively homogeneous foreign affairs elite which over the years provided to American society a broad sense of confidence and direction, by the internalization by the American public of a broad concept of world affairs into which even new phenomena could over some years be assimilated, and by the underlying values and priorities widely shared by most Americans. In brief, the earlier consensus was based on the WASP elite, on the cold war as the basic organizing principle, and on the willingness of the public to assign higher priority to external obligations than to internal needs.

All of that had become the past by the mid-1970s, with profound change within America interacting confusingly with profound changes outside America. The appearance of new and more radical states, the spread of statism, the demands for a new international order did not fit the earlier cold war formulas, nor the traditional view of a world balance of power assuring a generation of peace (as propagated by Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger), nor the benign expectations of the more internationalist critics of power politics and of the advocates of peace through aid and development.

It is difficult to estimate how long it will take for America to absorb and internalize a reasonably coherent yet necessarily flexible conceptual understanding of the emerging

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new world. Leaving aside the intellectual complexity of the process of formulating propositions that can be simultaneously responsive to global complexity and yet susceptible to wider acceptance, the matter is complicated by the changes in the character of the contemporary American elite and in American values. The waning of the WASP eastern seaboard-Ivy League-Wall Street foreign affairs elite is a critically important aspect of that change. That elite, dominant in foreign affairs for more than half a century, provided the country with much of its leadership during America's thrust to world greatness, and that leadership was in turn based on shared values and solid institutional pillars of support.

These values—though they are elusive to precise definition—were a combination of the traditional Protestant ethic, of strong American patriotism, of a blend of “manifest destiny” with Wilsonian “universalism,” of Keynesian economic neoliberalism, all strongly conditioned by the failure in the 1930s to shape a system of collective security, in part because of American self-negation. The strong sense of a special U.S. global responsibility, inherent in this blend, was in turn reinforced by the post-World War II Stalinist challenge. All this made the public level for at least an indirect claim to greatness, combining the elite's ambition to be the world's number one power with the popular desire to be loved and with the general American belief in America's idealism. At the same time, the predominant WASP elite enjoyed the institutional backing of the internationally-oriented eastern business-banking community, with which it was in a rather symbiotic relationship, and was also tied—often by close personal links—to the Protestant tradition and church (Here, both Dulles and Acheson provide striking but by no means the only examples).

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by itself cracked WASP morale, motivation, and monopoly of foreign affairs. Social change by the 1960s was bringing to the forefront of American society new groups, clamoring for recognition and proper place. Among them stood out the Irish and the Jewish. Their rise on the social and philosophical plane coincided with the wider crisis of American culture, brought on—as I argued much more fully in *Between Two Ages*—by the unprecedented plunge of American society beyond the industrial age into a new postindustrial technetronic era, for which there was no prior philosophical or cultural preparation. The result was an upheaval in American values and culture, a crisis of confidence as well as sharpened ethnic cleavages. Of the latter, the racial aspect seized public attention, but the struggle to displace and to replace the WASPs was no less significant, even if less visible. It was waged with great intensity especially on the cultural-mass media front, where it soon became fashionable to denounce the WASPs in terms which, if applied to any other group, would have been considered ethnically or racially prejudiced. The underlying theme of David Halberstam's widely read *The Best and the Brightest* was the alleged arrogance and the historical irrelevance of the WASPs (with the two Bundy brothers depicted as antiheroes), and in some ways the book was a key weapon—as were many press articles—of this cultural-ethnic conflict.

The entrance into the presidency of Richard Nixon coincided with the breakdown of WASP domination of foreign affairs—as well as with the collapse of the earlier conceptual framework. It did not entail, however, the appearance of a new and equally homogeneous foreign policy elite. Perhaps the most successful ethnic group—replacing the displaced WASPs—was now the Jewish (ably represented in key administration posts), but the dominant pattern was one of greater fluidity and heterogeneity. In that more flexible context both academia and the mass media—emerging to some extent as

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the functional successors to business and church—became the critical sources of authority, granting or withdrawing legitimacy as well as influencing policy. Neither of these two groups was dominated by the WASPs, neither partook to the same extent of traditional WASP values, both were less committed to an enduring world view, and the latter was especially inclined—in part because of professional impulses—toward a more volatile and impressionistic attitude on world politics. Moreover, neither of these possessed the coherence of values nor the social confidence to generate sustained leadership. Academia was disillusioned and increasingly captivated by determinist pessimism; the national mass media were professionally skeptical while the struggle against presidential abuse of power encouraged more generally an adversary style in relationship to the government.

During the early 1970s the resulting policy void was filled largely by Kissinger. His “spectaculars” deflected debate from the more basic issues and gave the administration—at least for a while—a certain room for maneuver in the field of foreign affairs. However, it did so only for a while. The disintegration of the earlier consensus which accompanied the decline of the WASPs, and the secretive style and the manipulative character of Kissinger's stewardship had the effect of accelerating congressional entry in direct foreign policy making. For much of the postwar era, Congress—led by a leadership that tended toward bipartisanship in foreign affairs—felt it understood and partook of the basic strategic objectives of U.S. foreign policy. On the basis of that shared strategic comprehension, it was prepared to grant U.S. policy-makers considerable tactical flexibility. But in a setting in which Congress became increasingly suspicious that proclaimed doctrines were essentially deceptive, and with the earlier consensus shattered by the Vietnam war, Congress became more inclined to intrude into tactical issues while debating the larger strategic matters.

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The result was not only an executive-legislative conflict over a number of foreign policy issues (be it Cyprus or Panama), but also—given the wider changes in American society—the increased intrusion of more fragmented concerns into policy debates. With the earlier consensus absent, with the WASP elite no longer personalizing and legitimating an asserted overall national interest, the Greeks could lobby more effectively—and with less danger of being accused of insensitivity to the national interest—on the Cyprus issue; the Jews could do so on the Israeli-Arab conflict and more generally on American policy toward the Middle East or the United Nations; Southerners could block change in U.S. policies toward Panama and derivatively toward Latin America.

This fragmentation of national motivation was accompanied by a broader shift in public attitudes toward foreign policy. Though public opinion polls are not a reliable indicator of enduring trends, though much depends both on the manner in which specific issues are posed and on the mood of the moment, and though the massive documentation that is available on U.S. public opinion attitudes on foreign affairs does not offer in all cases a consistent picture, enough of a pattern has emerged from a number of separate public opinion studies to warrant some important conclusions. Eschewing detail, the polling data suggests that in the course of the last decade the U.S. public: (1) has downgraded U.S. foreign and defense priorities and upgraded domestic priorities to a point in which the latter predominate to a considerable degree; (2) has become disinclined to support in a consistent fashion higher budgetary allocations for defense; (3) has become less inclined to view the Soviet Union and/or China as an imminent threat to U.S. interests; (4) has become generally more inclined to favor cuts or withdrawals of U.S. forces stationed abroad; (5) has become increasingly skeptical about the efficacy or desirability of foreign aid; (6) has become much more critical

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of the United Nations and of the coalition of the Third and Fourth Worlds increasingly dominant in it; and (7) has even begun to favor less U.S. foreign trade. More generally and even more surprisingly, the American public has become increasingly willing to describe itself as isolationist (in response in 1974 to a Roper poll bearing on self-identification 42 per cent of the respondents described themselves as internationalists and 37 per cent as isolationists) despite the negative connotations that over the years the term "isolationist" had acquired.³

However, it would be wrong to conclude from the foregoing that a new isolationist consensus has finally taken shape. The data did not support the proposition that America was unambiguously turning inward. On some issues, such as foreign intervention, the public tended to be constant: in most cases against, but in the few favorable ones also constantly so over the years (with a larger and also relatively constant number willing to provide supplies to friendly nations that have been attacked). More importantly, the public remained willing to back international efforts on behalf of human rights, and to support (by a margin of 66 per cent as compared to 68 per cent in 1947) an "active part" by the United States in world affairs. Finally, polls showed a heightened recognition of the need for international cooperation in dealing with various new

³ On the whole, such public sentiments tended to be consonant with elite attitudes, where in some respect they were even more dominant. As B. M. Russett noted "Anti-military-spending attitudes are concentrated precisely among those most likely to take an interest in international affairs, to vote, to make campaign contributions, and otherwise to be politically active." A Chicago Council study of public and elite attitudes noted a similarly greater leaning to one side among the leadership groups. That tendency was especially marked among the new congressmen that came to Washington after the 1974 elections (and especially among the "new liberal" Democrats, only 20 per cent of whom in response to a request to identify the nation most threatening to world power named the Soviet Union with another 20 per cent similarly identifying Israel). Overall, the House of Representatives, for instance, was reported in mid-1975 to be opposed to foreign aid by a margin of 53 per cent to 41 per cent.

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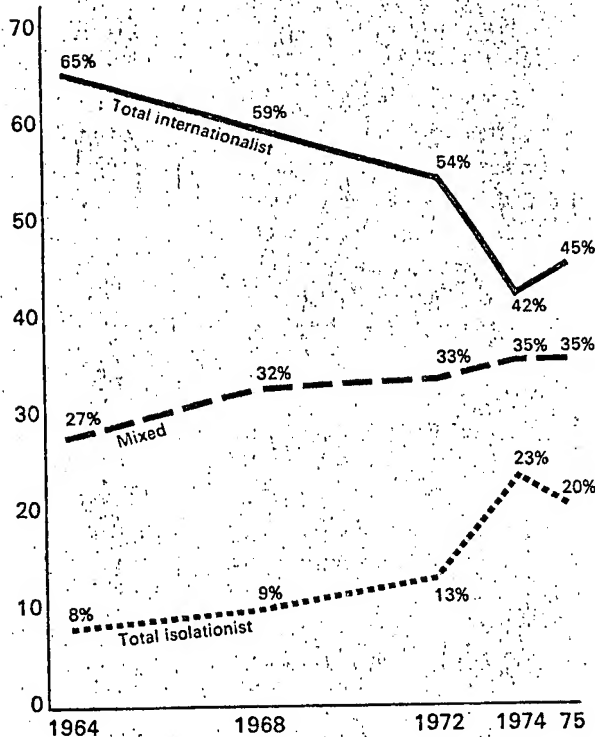
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global problems (notably, food, energy, and inflation) and for closer cooperation among the advanced countries, as well as recognition of the close linkage between developments abroad and future internal prospects for America. In brief, despite the sharpening cleavage within public opinion, isolationism was not the dominant mood.

Internationalist/isolationist trends 1964-1975*
In percentages



*The figures for 1964 and 1968 are derived from responses to five statements concerning the general posture the United States should assume in world affairs. The figures for 1972, 1974, and 1975 reflect responses to the same set of five statements, as well as two new statements regarding possible U.S. military intervention in defense of allies.

Source: Potomac Associates, Washington, D.C.

Indeed, the data even suggested a potential for a constructive global attitude and it indicated relatively little predisposition in favor of a crusade either on behalf of capitalism or of liberal democracy (in a 1975 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations study

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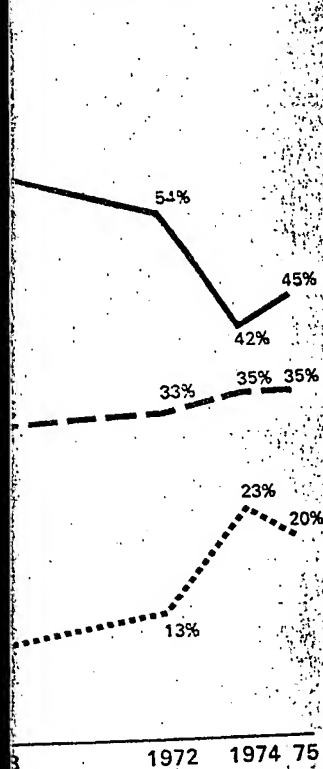
both the public and leadership ranked the export of either at the bottom of a list of 18 suggested goals). Also manifest, however, was a great deal of confusion about the future and uncertainty about specific policies to be followed. A public opinion that was ambivalent but constructively malleable emerged from the surveys and it heightened the need for national leadership that was capable of defining politically and morally compelling directions to which the public might then positively respond.

But in the absence of such leadership there remains the real risk that drift could become a decisive trend. Such a trend would be in keeping with some pertinent and striking predictions made years ago, which note the cyclical nature of the American public attitudes on foreign affairs. The first of these studies, by the Russian economic historian Nikolai D. Kondratieff, pointed to the recurring pattern of recessions in America and—an important corollary often ignored by those who refer to the Kondratieff cycles—to the related phenomenon of political-cultural change in American society. Using data on wages, prices, interest rates, and capital flows, Kondratieff noted a regularity in upward and downward trends in the capitalist economy, on the basis of which he predicted in the mid-1920s that the 1970s will witness an inflationary peak followed by a long downward "wave" accompanied by sharply heightened American social conservatism and indifference to world affairs.

An American social scientist, focusing more directly on U.S. attitudes toward international affairs, reached in the 1950s a remarkably similar conclusion. Frank Klingberg, having systematically collated data concerning foreign affairs—presidential messages, party platforms, election results, frequency of foreign treaties, naval expenditures, armed expeditions, wars, and diplomatic warnings—argued that since 1776 America's relationship to the world has been characterized by alternating

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cycles of "extroversion" and "introversion."⁴ With each phase of extroversion having lasted about 27 to 28 years, Klingberg concluded, with remarkable prescience, that "in view of America's past record, and of the presumed role of 'internal' factors in promoting the introvert-extrovert rhythm it seems logical to expect America to retreat to some extent at least from so much world involvement and perhaps to do so sometime in the 1960s."

The possibility that a secular and long-range trend is at work heightens—rather than lessens—the centrality of the leadership response in America and makes all the more dangerous appeals calculated to exploit American disenchantment with world affairs. In contemporary American attitudes there are the makings of xenophobia—but there is also the potential for constructive response. Powerful but paralyzed by the absence of will could be the American destiny if the leadership needed to translate that potential into reality fails to materialize.

America the Indispensable

Such a failure would be disastrous not only for America but even more so for the world at large. It is doubtful that a self-isolated America in a rapidly changing world could maintain (especially given the twin impacts of communications and economics) its own internal equilibrium, its own values, and eventually perhaps its own political system. Internal polarization and fears would be likely to generate grave tensions, ultimately undermining from within the spiritual substance and the political resilience of any would-be fortress America.

However, the capacity of America to act consistently and constructively is limited by the paradoxical nature of America's relationship to the changing world. It is an interactive relationship, in which the world is subjected socially to a process of American-

⁴Frank L. Klingberg, "The Historical Alteration of Moods in American Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, January 1952.

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ization even while America politically seems to be undergoing a process of Europeanization. While America impacts in a novel fashion on the rest of the world through its technology and mass culture, American politics appears to be becoming more fragmented doctrinally, with less consensus and more ideology, thus reviving on American soil some of the older Right-Left European battles. Global Americanization and American Europeanization make for a particularly uncertain blend, inhibiting the United States from applying constructively its unique global influence.

This is cause for concern because the American impact on the world remains, on the whole, positive; because American power, both political and economic, remains central; because the basic American message, some specific policies notwithstanding, continues to be relevant. An America that turns inward—repelled by the ugliness of the world around it and beset by internal ideological conflict—would create a vacuum that would be filled less by any single power, though that might be the result in some regions, and more simply by escalating chaos.

The American impact on the world should not be underestimated. For all its shortcomings, America remains the globally creative and innovative society. Its impact on the lifestyles, mores, and aspirations of other societies to a degree not matched today by any other system. This is true of the world of academia, with the United States having emerged not only as the major source of learning, but also as the most attractive magnet for foreign students, again to a degree that outdistances other nations by far.

⁵It is noteworthy that despite much global criticism of U.S. policies, the attraction of the United States for foreign students has continued to grow. According to data from UNESCO and from the Institute for International Education, in 1960 there were 48,000 foreign students in the United States and 2,000 additional foreign students came as immigrants; in 1965 the respective figures were 82,000 and 6,000; in 1970 114,000 and 20,000; in 1975, 155,000 and 65,000. In contrast, the Soviet figure for 1970 was only 17,500. In effect, about one out of every four foreign students was choosing the United States.

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it has more recently become true of the artistic world, with New York City emerging as the global center for many of the arts; it is very true in the case of modern management techniques, with American business schools and management consulting firms pioneering new skills; it certainly has been the case with the women's liberation movement and with the ecological movement and even with the New Left; it is very much the case with mass leisure and culture, with American music, jeans, and social habits rapidly becoming the world norm.

As America plunges into the uncharted new technetronic age, increasingly dominated by electronics and technology (hence the neologism "technetronic"), even its shortcomings become more broadly significant. Be it the drug culture or the setbacks in shaping more harmonious race relations, or the psychological problems of excessive permissiveness, the negative lessons of America acquire a wider significance and are closely scanned by others. In brief, contemporary America is the world's social laboratory. Its ferment, its new ideas, its experiments provide both stimulus and warnings.

Moreover, the overall impact of America is to stimulate change. Indeed, there is a paradox here in that American policies have seemed to be oriented against change whereas the broad social/political impact of America has been inherently anti-traditional and antiauthoritarian. Generally speaking, the American social impact and hence at least derivatively also political, has been to encourage more social experimentation, more institutional flexibility, more willingness to welcome rather than to oppose breaks with tradition. An inward-oriented America would gradually cease to perform that role.

American power remains similarly central to global stability and progress. The failure of Europe and of Japan to surface and to assume major political responsibilities represents the central and continuing disappointment of American postwar policy. Had

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these nations become more actively and constructively engaged in coping with global problems the pressures on America and the American role would have been much reduced, and the prospects for an East-West accommodation with a more effectively contained Soviet Union greatly enhanced. 30 years after the end of the war, neither Europe nor Japan are prepared to play a major role—neither in regard to the traditional nor in regard to the new global problems. (Toshio Kimura, former foreign minister of Japan and the head of the Japanese delegation to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 1975—where the United States was the only advanced nation to submit detailed proposals for changes designed to move toward a new economic order—quite bluntly stated that he was ashamed of the "general metaphysical" character of the statement that he had to submit on behalf of his government.) Admittedly, France did take timely procedural initiatives in 1974-1975, especially in launching the so-called Tripartite Conference on Commodities which brought together both the advanced and the developing nations, but the success of these conferences was again dependent largely on American reaction.

Moreover, the economic dislocations suffered by the advanced industrial societies, especially because of the higher oil prices exacted by OPEC, have underlined the crucial economic and political role of the United States—indeed, making the United States more pivotal than it has been for almost 50 years. Furthermore, despite the understandable resentment within the poorer parts of the world over a situation in which one-sixteenth of the world's population is consuming one-third of the world's non-renewable resources, the global stake in American prosperity and higher production (and also consumption) was inducing by 1975 more and more governments to put pressure on the United States to accelerate its economic recovery from the ongoing

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sion. Nothing could be more illustrative of the American centrality to global economic well-being than these calls for a higher American rate of growth.

More generally, the systemic role of America, both economically and politically, has become that of the key stabilizer. This has been especially the case with food, with the United States having emerged as the key source of global nutritional stability, but it has clearly also been so with trade, monetary affairs, and regional security. When America falters, the world economy and the political equilibrium become unstable—a lesson well drawn explicitly in these terms by Charles Kindleberger's *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* and even more applicable to the present conditions. What is more, to cite the words of Robert Gilpin, writing in Bergsten's and Krause's *World Politics and International Economics*:

The scale, diversity, and dynamics of the American economy will continue to place the United States at the center of the international economic system. The universal desire for access to the huge American market, the inherent technological dynamism of the American economy, and America's additional strength in both agriculture and resources—which Europe and Japan do not have—provide a cement sufficient to hold the world economy together and to keep the United States at its center.

The same happens to be true politically and strategically, especially in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East.

An America that ceased to project a constructive sense of direction would hence contribute directly to major global economic and political disruptions.

Finally, the broad historical message of America still retains much of its validity, provided it is not dogmatized into terms that could only produce American isolation. The basic message of the American experience was the primacy of liberty. But inherent in that was also the centrality of pluralism. Personal liberty was best assured

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by a society that was pluralistic. On the global scale, pluralism means diversity and not a march toward a homogeneous world based on a single ideological model. The message remains valid and has become especially valid because of the appearance of some 150-odd sovereign nation-states. Moreover, tied to more specific proposals for global cooperation, it could serve as the point of departure for a relevant concept of a new and more diversified international system.

All of that requires an America that cooperatively engaged in shaping new global relations, both despite and because of the rising global egalitarian passions. America should not forget that external hostility is not generalized to the extent that it applies to the American society as a whole. It is primarily a doctrinal rather than a national hostility, and even as such it may still not be deeply rooted. America still provides the most people in the world the most attractive social condition (even if not the model) and that remains America's special strength. The Soviet Union is not even a rival in this respect. But that strength can only be applied if American foreign policy is sympathetically sensitive to the significant shift in global emphasis toward a value which has not been central to the American experience. This need not entail an American embrace of egalitarianism as the supreme virtue or its artificial application to a differentiated and still much more open, less congested and certainly more affluent American society. But it does imply a policy that does not ignore (nor reciprocate with doctrinal hostility) the global pressures for reform of existing international arrangements. To reduce global complexity and the emerging global preoccupations to the simple dichotomy of democracy (or freedom) versus despotism (or statism) is in fact to sever the libertarian linkage between America and the world, it is to reinforce radical passions abroad, it is to promote America's philosophical and hence also political isolation.

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tions have also more immediate application. In the ongoing Conference on International Economic Cooperation, the United States has the opportunity to shape a policy toward the developing world that takes the philosophical dimensions as well as the political realities discussed earlier more fully into account, a position which the Europeans and even the Japanese have so far appeared more willing to adopt. Moreover, in the foreseeable future the United States may be facing difficult crises in parts of Africa or Latin America. There may also be political instability in Eastern Europe. The underlying premises that will guide the American attitude toward these issues may very directly affect the ultimate capacity of the United States to respond in a manner which is in America's longer-range interest and which enables the United States to coalesce around itself the sympathies and support of the majority of mankind.

Nothing could be more destructive than for the United States to position itself as the ultimate shield of the remnants of white supremacy in Africa at a time when racial equality is coming to be accepted as an imperative norm. This would rally all of Africa and much of Afro-Asia against us. Similarly, American longer-range interests would be harmed by continuing indifference to the mounting desire in Central America for greater social justice and national dignity, as our indifference will only make it easier for Castro's Cuba to exploit that desire. Much of Latin America could be antagonized by any resulting conflicts. Finally, America would be untrue to its own initial values if it adopted a cynical view regarding the Soviet relationship to those East European countries that either seek to enlarge or to protect their own national independence. The consequences of such a stance would be harmful to the United States in all of Europe and even in China.

Above all, it is vital to remember that ultimately it is only America that has the power to shape a hostile world for itself.

A SENSE OF DRIFT, A TIME FOR CALM

by Richard Holbrooke

For 12 years, until one year ago, of Vietnam—provided a relatively litmus test for everyone. People were with relative ease on a single-band spectrum from hawk to dove; and individuals along it, invariably from right to left, war ran into increasing difficulties and opposition at home.

Many thought that the battle lines during those years of hard and divisive debate would continue in the Vietnam era. Had they survived into the Vietnam era, the debate would have been relatively easier to understand and follow, than it has been the case. But that did not

The sides are no longer clearly defined. Indeed, the confusion is often so great that one cannot even tell which side of the debate some of our highest leaders are on. One week the president seems to side with those fearful that America has become culturally inferior to the Soviet Union; the next week, he asserts that America is "second to none." His uncertainty is matched by others, including the Secretary of State, whose private gloom about the decline of the West is exhibited only in public, where he sticks for the most part to statements that if America will only follow its national consensus and follow the President in chief, it will again be the most powerful nation on earth. Critics argue that we are getting weaker and must take action to regain clear-cut supremacy. They assail us for continuing the arrogance of power, of insensitivity to the new

That these are the most difficult questions our nation must face is obvious. But the answers are neither obvious nor, ultimately, empirically derivable. They must be sought, out of the confusion of the nation